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AN UNEXPECTED FRENCH WAR-CRY AGAINST GERMANY.

BY KARL BLIND.

I.

IT was with sincere regret that I read recently, in a London magazine, a strange article from the pen of my friend, M. Yves Guyot, a former French Cabinet Minister, on "Pan-Germanism, Holland and Belgium." I conscientiously believe that this article is calculated—if its hints and suggestions were acted upon—to injure both the French Republic and the Liberal and Democratic cause in England. For it fans, under an apparent introductory show of quiet matter-of-fact disquisition, that flame of unjust hostility against Germany, the constant feeding of which flame is already attended to more than enough by the most illiberal and intriguing "Jingoes."

I can speak on that subject all the more openly because, since 1849, I have given sufficient proofs of my hearty interest in the French Republican cause by numerous writings in German, English, French and Italian. I have been connected by intimate friendship with not a few of the most eminent Republican leaders, such as Ledru-Rollin, Louis Blanc. I have exerted myself in exile, though unfortunately in vain, to bring the leaders of the various groups, so bitterly opposed to each other, together for the sake of common cooperation. Through good report and evil report I have stood by them, albeit privately I had sometimes to warn several of them against aggressive designs which they harbored against our Rhinelands, before 1870. I warned them—yet scarcely any of them would believe it—that in case of a hostile encounter France would suffer one of the most awful defeats. When, in November, 1870, my old friend Wolfrid de Fouriellie, who, like Louis Blanc, had honorably exerted him-

self against a declaration of war, came over to my house for the purpose of enlisting, after all, active English sympathies for his country, I told him and Dr. Congreve—the late Positivist leader, who accompanied him—that “the best thing he could do would be to go straightway back to France and to work for the speediest possible conclusion of peace. Otherwise, the longer the war lasted, the more severe would the conditions of peace naturally be.”

This, I merely refer to, so as to clear away any misinterpretation of what I have to say now.

II.

First of all, then, it is necessary to bring to mind that the author of “Pan-Germanism, Holland and Belgium,” who alleges that Germany is bent upon the conquest and annexation of the Netherlands, and who calls upon England, in alliance with France, to protect those small States against their powerful neighbor, had a blameworthy part in that very matter. The fact is, he himself took the side of the aggressor in a recent war against two very small States—and those States, free Commonwealths. Their names were, the South-African Republic and the Orange Free State. They are inhabited by a Dutch-speaking people, kindred, by race and language, to the Hollanders and to the Flemings of Belgium, which latter form nearly two-thirds of that little kingdom; the French-speaking Walloons being a minority. The Hollanders and the Flemings are practically of the same tongue.

Surely, if ever there was a case for a Republican to side with endangered small States, for which the people of Holland and Belgium felt the deepest concern on racial grounds, that case was clearly given in South Africa. M. Yves Guyot must have known that, by the London Treaty of 1884, that English “suzerainty” which had been established over the Transvaal after a previous forcible annexation under the Tory Government of Disraeli, had been literally and formally abolished. I have shown years ago that Lord Derby himself, the Colonial Secretary in 1884, positively conceded that abolition. With his own hand he struck out all references to suzerainty in the old treaty and assented to a wholly new one. Mr. Chamberlain, as late as 1896, when a Cabinet Minister in a Conservative Government,

avowed publicly in the House of Commons—as had done Liberal Ministers before him—that the British Crown had by treaty no right whatever to interfere in the home affairs of the South-African Republic. If President Krüger, he declared, thought there was danger to his country in giving the suffrage to the alien immigrants, he was perfectly entitled to withhold it.

It is true, Mr. Chamberlain afterwards suddenly veered round. Three months before the citizens of the South-African Republic took measures of precaution against the continually increasing number of English troops that were landed, Mr. Chamberlain formally threatened President Krüger with the application of "*force*" if the demand for the suffrage were not complied with now. That was an ultimatum. The Boers then tried to forestall the danger.

Europe, from one end to the other, sympathized with the victims of aggression. In Republican France there was unanimity in favor of the two small Republican States of South Africa. In the United States the same feeling prevailed. Every one following the course of affairs was astounded to see M. Yves Guyot taking sides the other way. Nobody knew how to explain it. From that day his influence waned perceptibly, and finally the direction of the paper he had edited slipped from his hands.

III.

In the article before me, M. Yves Guyot, though knowing how bitterly Dutchmen and Belgians felt, and still feel, towards England on account of the sanguinary events mentioned, still reproves the people of those small States for the feelings they had shown towards their kinsmen in South Africa. He bids them look to England and France as their protectors. Even the fact of Liberal English statesmen, now at the head of Government, having stigmatized that war as a "frivolous, unjust one," carried on by "methods of barbarism," and denounced the Concentration Camps—which were imitated from those established by a cruel Spanish General in Cuba, and which cost 20,000 of innocent lives—has not, strange to say, made the French writer reflect. In this, I am glad to say, he is totally at issue with the Republican party of his own country.

As to the alleged danger to the Low Countries from Germany, he arrives at that conclusion by a very complicated and rather

artificial way of reasoning. He grants that German commerce has sought an outlet at Antwerp without any ulterior annexationist object. Its extension to that port, he says, was quite in the natural course of trade. But then he paints the advantages of real conquest in such seductive colors that he assumes it would be a wonder if annexation did not follow.

This, I think, is rather a perilous procedure on his part. Might not some of those who are unjustly, but persistently, charged with conquering designs, say to themselves at last: "Why, if things are described as so tempting and so profitable, and if we are always to suffer from such unfounded suspicion, would it not be better to do the deed?"

M. Yves Guyot also says—and in that I agree with him—that "the death of the Emperor Francis Joseph will by no means be the end of the Austrian Empire." But for that very reason he suggests that Germany will seek to satisfy her ambition in another direction, by drawing Holland, and perhaps Belgium, into her zollverein, with a view to a future annexation. All these would-be clever hints and pointed innuendos have the final aim of rousing universal suspicion against Germany and promoting an armed alliance against her.

Now, the mass of the German nation intends as little to injure the independence of Holland and Belgium as that of Switzerland. These countries were once part of the old German Empire; but there is no wish to force them back under the new Empire, whose basis was laid by that "fratricidal war"—as Prince Bismarck himself called it some years after 1866—through which nearly a quarter of the population and the beautiful, strategically important territory, were ejected, which formerly belonged to the Empire and to the subsequent German Confederation. There is no prospect of recovering even these old German provinces of ours under present circumstances. It could only be done by a new war, and this nobody in Germany wishes for; or by a revolution in Austria, which is now far from being likely.

Yet, if such reunion were ever possible, who would have a right to oppose it? Had France lost her Provençal departments near the Mediterranean, or the Bretagne, where the people speak a Celtic, non-French, language, or a Basque territory near the Pyrenees, through a "fratricidal war"; or, if Britain had lost Wales or Scotland or even Ireland, in a similar manner—who

would be entitled to object to a reunion, if France or England were bent upon it?

IV.

Now, how does France stand with regard to Belgium and Holland? Would it not be better to lay on her the brush with which Germany is wrongly tarred?

It is a historical fact that, under Royal, Republican and Imperial Governments in France, repeated attempts of conquest were made in that northern direction. France possesses to this day a strip of territory near the Belgian frontier, where Low-German—that is, Flemish—is spoken. Under Napoleon I, the Netherlands were overrun and put under a brother of his as a satrap. At the same time, the so-called “Rhine League,” established by the Corsican despot, was extended as far as Lübeck, on the Baltic, and Saxony, near the Russian frontier! Yet, the name of Napoleon was, in later years, one to charm with—even among a certain section of French Democracy.

I have myself seen enough of that still in my earlier days. I have found Louis Bonaparte attacked as “*le petit*,” in suggestive distinction from “*le grand*.” I have heard Félix Pyat, as an exile, yet glorying in the fact of Napoleon I having “*fait briller l’épée de la France à travers l’Europe*.” Afterwards, no doubt, Pyat changed considerably. I have read laudatory words about Napoleon I in Victor Hugo’s “*Napoléon le petit*.” When the war of 1870 began, one of Hugo’s sons wrote that “The Prussians will be sent across the Rhine, *avec un coup de pied dans le derrière*.” Years after that war, the aged, distinguished poet, who as the descendant of a patriotic German Lorrainer, had once confessed that he himself had Gothic (Teutonic) blood in his veins, still declared that, before the Golden Age of Peace can be introduced, there must be a last war in which Mayence, Treves, Cologne and Aix—purely German towns!—must be annexed to France.

I remember that in 1848, soon after the establishment of the Republic, an attempt at an invasion of Belgium was made by a French free-corps. The statement at the time was that Ledru-Rollin, my old friend, as a member of the Provisional Government, was not unconnected, by way of furnishing means from secret funds, with that venture. It was done somewhat in the Dr. Jameson style, and it failed most miserably, like the

one in South Africa. And are we to forget the draft of the Benedetti Treaty, submitted by Napoleon III to the Prussian Government, in which the annexation of Belgium to France was proposed?

I have had a curious personal experience, in that respect, with an eminent French statesman and famed member of the Academy, M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, once Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Third Republic. When in office, he was often accused of being subservient to the Berlin Government. He was, now and then, even called "*Prussien*." Well, what did he say to an interviewer as late as 1891, and afterwards in letters to me?

He declared that France had a natural right to have her frontiers on the Atlantic, on the Pyrenees, on the Mediterranean, and along the course of the Rhine. Having doubted the correctness of the report given in the "*Times*," I wrote to him. He confirmed its correctness. Then I pointed out to him that in this way he claimed for France the greater part of Switzerland, all German territory on the left bank of the Rhine, *the whole of Belgium, and a portion of Holland*.

After this, that moderate politician and philosopher still declared that these were his views and aims. This curious correspondence is in my possession.

Might, then, Belgians and Dutchmen not be inclined to say, as regards a combined French and English protectorate of their independence: "*Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis*"? Might they not even fear that the final issue of such a Protectorate would perhaps be a French annexation of Belgium and an English "suzerainty" of the well-known kind over Holland?

Often enough I have heard Frenchmen say, in the style of Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, that Belgium naturally belongs to their country. Many of them, either from ignorance or from design, asserted that its population was mainly French. Flemish they called "a mere patois." Yet it is the language of the majority of the Belgians, and its literature stands side by side with Dutch.

Considering all the facts I have thus rapidly indicated, I think the Belgians are entitled to look rather southward for a possible danger.

Yet M. Yves Guyot says: "It is from Germany that Belgium has everything to fear."

V.

"A burnt child fears the fire." The Dutch have seen what a claim of "suzerain" protectorship leads to, even when it has been apparently abandoned in a new treaty. In the case of the Transvaal Republic that claim was revived from the ashes of the old treaty, out of a paragraph inserted in the new treaty of 1884, concerning treaties to be concluded between the Republic and foreign Powers. I warned President Krüger at the time about this danger, as I stated years ago in *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*. He would not believe in the danger. He thought his country, wishing to live a secluded life, had even no occasion to enter into any treaty of importance with foreign Powers. Hence the possibility of complications arising from that paragraph was not to be foreseen at all. Having achieved the abolition of the suzerainty, he was satisfied with the result of his negotiations in London. This was before the discovery of the large gold-fields.

Half an hour before the final signature of the new treaty in Downing Street, I repeated my warning, even after the English and Dutch text had been handed to me in print at President Krüger's hotel. All was in vain. It was too late. When the Transvaal deputation left London, they sent me a highly honoring letter, in which it was said that they intrusted to me the care of the interests of the South-African Republic in England.

Not many years afterwards, my previsions turned out to have been only too correct. A perfect campaign of misrepresentation as regards the continued existence of "suzerainty" was organized in the English press. And though I proved ever so often the falsehood of the assertion, public opinion was systematically misled. The rest is well known.

In his eager desire to show up Germany, which has kept the peace for thirty-five years, as the great danger to European security, M. Yves Guyot does not hesitate to refer to a proposal made by Napoleon III in 1863, for the convocation of a Congress which was to discuss a general disarmament. He mentions a further sinister proposal of the French Emperor, made in January, 1870, six months before the war broke out. In that latter case, Queen Victoria, M. Guyot writes, was to hand the project of Napoleon over to William I of Prussia.

M. Yves Guyot has not a single word to say about the trust-

worthiness and character of the Man of December, who murdered the Roman Republic; who then murdered the French Republic which he had sworn to maintain, adding on his own behalf that he "would consider as his personal enemy any one daring to attack that Republic"; who some years later made a war for the alleged establishment of Italian independence, which ended in the annexation of Nice (Garibaldi's birthplace) and Savoy; who, again, tried to murder the Mexican Republic, and, being foiled there, declared, as a last means of upholding his dynasty, war against Prussia, with the object of conquering the German Rhinelands.

For a French Republican it is somewhat strange to quote this criminal usurper as a true friend of peace. I may here mention, on the authority of Ledru-Rollin, who had timely information from a relative of his, a military officer of high rank, that Napoleon III already intended to make war against Prussia in 1868, on account of Luxemburg which he wanted to annex. In a State Council presided over by him, war was indeed formally resolved upon. Next day, the several Ministers were to call upon him for receiving further instructions. Over night, however, being already much stricken with the well-known sickness, his courage vanished. When the Ministers came, they were told that the matter was put off for the nonce. It was then that Marshal Niel indignantly exclaimed: "*Cet homme nous déshonore!*"

Truly, something better might be done than to quote the perjured perpetrator of the State stroke of 1851, as an advocate of peace and disarmament.

VI.

Those who aim at a freer intercourse between nations will read with astonishment a passage in Yves Guyot's article, which runs thus:

"The Belgians and the Dutch have already consented to a form of union which, according to the 'Almanach de Gotha,' takes the title of 'Union of the Administrations of German Railways': of which Union the railways of Germany, of the Netherlands and one Belgian railway, form part. I believe this Germanophile passion has calmed down; but in those last years we have witnessed singular aberrations on the part of the Dutch and the Belgians."

This, from a zealous champion of free trade, as M. Yves Guyot is, can scarcely be understood. What more natural thing could there be than that the Low Countries, of which Germany is commercially the "hinterland," should consent to a Railway Union? What "passion" is there to be denounced? Would he make a similar objection if it were a case of Railway Union between Belgium and France?

As to the "aberrations of the Dutch and the Belgians," the French statesman describes their sympathies with the South-African Republics as mental vagaries! This, now, is not a very effective means of enticing the people of the Netherlands into the Anglo-French fold. At most, it could have the result of turning Jingoës against the Dutch and the Belgians by way of revenge for the very natural leanings they had shown.

M. Yves Guyot objects also to the German fleet. He roundly asserts that "William II wants to have a fleet capable of struggling against the navy of England." Now here a few facts may be useful.

In the Middle Ages, the German Hansa was the great maritime power of the North; but it was a civic institution of free towns, utterly neglected by our Emperors. In the last century, previous to our Revolution of 1848-49, all our best Liberals and Democrats, and our patriotic poets like Herwegh and Freiligrath, considering, as they did, the difficult geographical position of Germany, which makes her so liable to attack from several land sides as well as from the sea, unanimously demanded the establishment of a German fleet. I joined in the demand at the time. By the National Assembly at Frankfort a beginning was made. Our worthless Princes, after having drowned in blood the popular movement for freedom and unity, sold that small navy by auction.

After 1870, when we had been in danger of having our coast-towns on the German Ocean and on the Baltic bombarded and put under tribute by the French fleet, which might have landed also troops, the call for a German fleet was renewed. William I was too much of a military martinet, Bismarck yet too deeply imbued with his early "Junker" training, to join heartily in that necessary movement.

William II, about whose home policy I scarcely need to say what I think, at last acted upon that call. Yet, in spite of every

effort, the German navy still ranks only as the fifth in strength. The French fleet surpasses it both in ships and men. Russia, before the war with Japan, also was ahead of us. Now, France and Russia are in alliance. Germany lies between them. What wonder that Germany endeavors to have a navy capable of defending her coasts, securing her necessary import of food in case of war, and protecting her growing over-sea trade? That trade is larger than the trade of France.

Compared with the English fleet, that of Germany is still enormously overmatched. England has a four-times larger navy. Her crews are about 130,000 men. Those of Germany, 32,000. Yet a Civil Lord of the English Admiralty, Mr. Arthur Lee, did not scruple to say before his constituents that, some day, a certain fleet in the North Sea might be smashed before the Power owning it had any notice of a proclamation of war. That piratically minded man was not removed from office, not even censured by his superiors. What if a similar threat had been held out by a member of the German Ministry of Marine against either England or France?

The French fleet, too, is larger than that of Germany. Has any one ever heard of a suggestion made in England that France should be called upon to restrict her naval armaments? Yet France and England have been at war for ever so many centuries. Nay, there has been danger of war again between them about the Fashoda question. And France, with an army equal in numbers to the German one, is quite close to England, while Germany is very far. And Germany and England have never crossed swords; France and England ever so often.

Of all this there is nothing whatever in M. Yves Guyot's article. On the contrary, he asserts that "the cordial understanding between England and France is founded exactly on the same reasons as those which *induced England to combat Napoleon I.*" Is that really so? A number of Englishmen might perhaps wish to know the details of such an alliance, defensive and offensive.

"The whole world," according to the French writer, "is endangered by a State in Europe, whose ambition has no limits, and whose Sovereign can dispose, at his pleasure, of peace or war in the world." Does M. Yves Guyot forget that this is also a privilege of the British Crown? And is he not aware of the

recent declaration of even the most moderate German journals, that, in spite of its restricted parliamentary rights, no Reichstag would ever be found to grant the necessary supplies for a frivolous war? The Paris Legislative Body, even the Opposition, after a short show of criticism, did, in the main, grant the supplies for the war against Germany. Does M. Yves Guyot believe that Germans, being all liable to serve, would be easily dragged into a frivolous war at a monarch's caprice? And does he forget that an English army, composed exclusively of men enlisting of their own free will, is always ready, at superior command, to strike a sudden blow?

In his concluding words, M. Yves Guyot says that "France and England represent a combined formidable strategic Power; and that, if in Germany there is a thought of landings in England, one can also foresee *landings of allied armies in Germany*, having, as a basis of operations, means of transport the efficiency of which was shown in the war in South Africa. All civilized nations have the same interests as France and England—a single one excepted."

Now, what language is this? I think I may safely say that the best French Republicans cannot approve of it. It calls for an aggressive militarism that would soon deliver the Republic—which is the result of defeats on the battle-field, and which has since been so often threatened by men like Marshal MacMahon and General Boulanger—into the hands of its most insidious enemies. As a sincere well-wisher of that Republic, and as one who would be the first to denounce a threatening invasion of England, if that imaginary peril were ever to come from a German Emperor, I deeply regret the extraordinary article of M. Yves Guyot. No; English Liberals will not allow themselves to be thus dragged into war by the setting up of an artificial Napoleonic bogey. They have had quite enough of the war against the Boers, which he so zealously advocated. Or is it to arch-Tory Jingo he addresses himself?

Perhaps his essay is fortunately published, not in English, but in French. That diminishes its pernicious influence. For, remarkable to say, in spite of the *entente cordiale*, few Englishmen are able to converse in, or to understand, French.

KARL BLIND.